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A Beckett, Gilbert Abbott  
The revolt of the  
workhouse

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THE  
REVOLT OF THE WORKHOUSE.

A BURLESQUE BALLET OPERA,

IN ONE ACT.

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BY

GILBERT ABBOTT À BECKETT,

AUTHOR OF "THE KING INCOG.," "THE SON OF THE SUN," ETC.

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FIRST PERFORMED

AT THE FITZROY THEATRE,

*MONDAY, FEBRUARY 24th, 1834.*

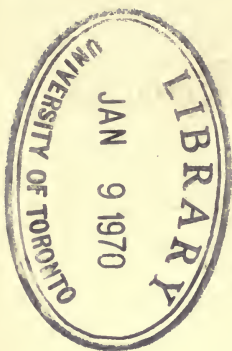
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LONDON:

JOHN MILLER, HENRIETTA STREET,  
COVENT GARDEN.

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1834.



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## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

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Mahomet Muggins, ( <i>Master of the Workhouse</i> ) . . . .	Mr. MANDERS.
Ismael Skullcrack, ( <i>Beadle in Chief</i> ) . . . . .	Mr. PERRY.
Myssouf Sheepshanks, ( <i>Clerk to the Establishment</i> ) .	Mr. HUGHES.
Araminta, ( <i>betrothed to Skullcrack</i> ) . . . . .	Miss CRISP.
Amelia, ( <i>her companion</i> ) . . . . .	Miss CHAPLIN.
Judy, ( <i>a bankrupt Basket Woman</i> ) . . . . .	Mrs. BRINDALL.
Sally Slack, ( <i>a pauper Negress</i> ) . . . . .	Mr. OXBERRY.
Moll Chubb, { <i>a done-up Spratswoman, and Com-</i> { <i>mander-in-Chief of the Female</i> } { <i>Revolters</i> .. . . . }	Mr. MITCHELL.

*Parish Officers, Lords of the Workhouse, Muggins's Body Guard,  
Policemen, Privates of the Female Army, &c. &c.*



THE  
REVOLT OF THE WORKHOUSE.

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SCENE I.

*The interior of the Workhouse ; through an open arch behind is the Court-yard ; on the P. S. is a door which leads to the female ward. MAHOMET MUGGINS is seated on a platform, O.P., surrounded by the workhouse officers.*

GRAND CHORUS. (*Fra Diavolo.*)

AIR—(" *On yonder rock reclining.*")

ON yonder chair reposing,  
Behold our Workhouse King in state :  
Full of wisdom is his pate ;  
Yes, and his power is great.

Where'er he pokes his nose in,  
Vice flies before his angry brow ;  
And there's none so well knows how  
To settle a workhouse row.

Tremble !

When with his cane he's beating,  
You'll hear their squalls repeating,

Oh, Gemini ! oh, Gemini ! oh, Gemini !

MUG. That's right, good folks,—I love to hear you sing  
Songs of affection to your workhouse king ;  
Since king I am ; though my parental sway  
Is only over paupers, let me say,  
I'm not the only sovereign, I fear,  
That rules o'er pauper subjects.

OMNES. Hear !

SHEEPS. Ah ! hear !

*(A violent ring is heard at the bell.)*

MUG. That ring proclaims there's some one at the gate.  
Ah ! 'tis our beadle with a broken pate.

*(Enter ISMAEL SKULLCRACK with a patch of blood on his temple.)*

My worthy Skullcrack, how I grieve to see  
That broken pate. Why, Lord a mercy me !  
Where did you get it ?—have you had a squabble  
With any of the filthy vulgar rabble ?

SKULL. As I was walking with my staff in hand  
Down the most crowded quarter of the Strand,  
Giving at intervals official whacks  
To sundry little urchins, on their backs,  
I saw a sight which didn't ought to be—

MUG. Speak quickly ; what the devil did you see ?

SKULL. A fruit woman exposing her effects  
For sale ; and so, Sir, as the act directs,  
I took her into custody.

MUG. 'Twas well.

Without a license 'tis a crime to sell ;  
For, says the law, none shall have chance to live,  
Unless they first a sum in tax can give.



But if they can't, I see no reason why  
They ought to wish to live.

SHEEPS. No more don't I.

MUG. But, Skullcrack, you are from your story led.  
Come, let your tale explain your broken head.

SKULL. Well, as I said before, I seized a dame  
Selling of apples, when a cry of "shame!"  
Burst from the populace, and all there present  
Began to pelt me.

SHEEPS. Bless me, how unpleasant!

SKULL. It was; and then there came a dreadful volley  
Of hot baked tatures.

SHEEPS. Lord, how melancholy!

SKULL. "Rescue the 'oman!" then became the cry;  
And cabbage leaves came thick into my eye.  
The mob at this began to kick and shin me;  
Then all at once the beadle rose within me.  
My staff I brandished thus—both right and left,  
On every side a skull or two was cleft—  
The people fell around—my foes were floored;  
And in the end my prisoner secured. (*Music Bas.*)

MUG. Thy deeds are valiant; well your tale you've  
spoken;  
Your honour's whole, although your head is  
broken.

Tarry with us a while; because to-day  
The female ward a visit have to pay.

SKULL. The female ward! does it? Egad! I'll stay.

MUG. Go, Sheepshanks, and the women paupers bring  
Into the presence of the workhouse king.

(*Exit SHEEPSHANKS, U.E.L.H.*)

I can assure you, Skullcrack, they possess  
 Among them a good share of loveliness.  
 But here they come ; look, be yourself assured,  
 For hither comes the female pauper ward. (*Music.*)

*Enter the whole of the FEMALE WARD from a door on  
 the left hand.*

SKULL. (*Aside.*) Methinks I know that form ; is it my love ?  
 But by one question I the fact can prove.  
 (*Aside to ARAMINTA.*) Sold you not apples in the  
 Strand last winter ?

ARAM. I did.

SKULL. Enough ; it is my Araminta !  
 How can I get to have a little talk ?  
 Oh, I'll beg for ye all to have a walk.

MUG. Well, valiant Skullcrack, don't the paupers' charms  
 Make one disposed to seek their precious arms ?

SKULL. They are, indeed, dear creatures ; but, by goles,  
 They are too much confined—the pretty souls—  
 So let me beg, by all my triumphs past,  
 By checks on omnibuses going too fast,  
 By informations laid against late hours  
 At public-houses—by—in fact, the powers,  
 I wish to ask a favour.

MUG. Cut along,—

I'll grant it, Mr. Skullcrack, right or wrong.  
 We like a beadle knowing what he's after,—  
 Quelling, in church, the little urchin's laughter.  
 A man, in fact, who walks the streets in doubt,  
 And breaks a head to find a mystery out ;

Who, in a crowd, belabours right and left,  
So making sure the proper head is cleft.

SKULL. I'm glad you think I do my duty right,  
For cracking skulls was always my delight.  
But my request—a holiday I seek  
For the whole female ward.

MUG. Mind what you speak.

SKULL. Grant me the boon if any how you're able.

MUG. Let your petition lie upon the table—  
But who are these approach our Workhouse board?

*Enter SHEEPSHANKS, U. E. L. H.*

SHEEPS. The new additions to the female ward.

*Enter AMELIA, MOLLY CHUB, JUDY, and SALLY SLACK.*

SKULL. Come forth!—who are you all?—But the first thing,  
You'll make your court'sies to the Workhouse  
king.—(*they do so.*)

That's right! now, what comes next? stop, let me  
see—

Ah! now down on your marrow-bones to me.

(*they do so.*)

That public justice may be well protected,  
'Tis right her officers should be respected.  
Down to the lowest! So, you paupers, hark!  
Pay your obeisances to yonder Clerk.

(*They commence doing so with great humility.*)

Stop—not so much as that; there are degrees  
In rank; to me you fell upon your knees—

A gentle bow for him—there is a *leedle*  
 Difference, I think, 'twixt workhouse clerk and  
 beadle.

(*They bow slightly to SHEEPSHANKS.*)

Ah ! that will do. The governor will now  
 Ask you some questions,—don't forget to bow.

MUG. Approach ! your names inform me in a crack.

MOLLY. Moll Chubb !

AMEL. Amelia !

JUDY. Judy !

SALLY. Sally Slack !

MUG. How come you here to lay your lazy heads  
 In luxury upon the parish beds ?  
 Moll Chubb, speak first—What were you out of  
 doors ?

MOLLY. What was I ? why a woman, sir, in course.

SKULL. No insolence ! the master wants to know  
 What was your calling.

MOLLY. Calling ! why *sprats*, ho !

MUG. Now then, Amelia, tell me—what were you ?

AMEL. Your worship, I've been in the fish line, too—  
 I was an oyster girl, and had a stall  
 At a street corner, very near St. Paul.

MUG. Your bus'ness did not thrive, I fear.

AMEL. Oh Lord !

Indeed it did ; for, daily round my board  
 Both great and little, rich and poor, did throng,  
 Demolishing the natives all day long.

MOLLY. Poor things, I wonder no one e'er admonished 'em.  
 Eating the natives must have so astonished 'em.

MUG. Keep silence, can't you, woman ! Now, my dear,  
Tell me what sad reverses brought you here.

AMEL. 'Gainst an attorney's door my stall, sir, stood,  
And so they drove me off.

MUG. Ah ! very good ;  
You know, my child, it was against the law.

MOLLY. No, that it wasn't—'twas against the door.

OMNES. Ha, ha, ha !

MUG. Now, Judy, as you call yourself, by name,  
Tell me the reason why you hither came.  
What was your bus'ness ?

JUDY. Bus'ness, did you say ?  
Nothing, at last ;—with corresponding pay,  
When times was good, I had been used to stand  
At market, with my basket in my hand,  
To carry fruits and flowers from Covent Garden ;  
But, Lord ! the season has been such a hard un,  
There ar'nt no vegetables now to fill  
A basket for my head.

MOLLY. About you still  
You have some vegetables.

JUDY. What are those ?

MOLLY. Why, ma'am, a little reddish is your nose ;  
And though you've got no basket on the top,  
Your head of carrots bears a precious crop.

JUDY. With your vile insolence my blood you churn up,  
If my nose is a reddish, your's, ma'am, is a *turn-up*.

MUG. Silence, you women ! stop your noisy clack !  
Let's have a word with Mrs. Sally Slack.  
How came you to the workhouse?—what were you ?

SALLY. I was a lady,

- MOLLY. Come, that wont do.
- SALLY. Indeed I was; I bellowed "sprats" all night,  
And called out "hareskins" by the morning light,  
My time dividing 'twixt my evening *bawls*,  
Like other ladies, and my morning calls.
- MUG. But of your coming here, explain the reason.
- SALLY. Your honour, hares and sprats is out of season.  
In March, you get no hares, but when you go out,  
And find old Boreas giving of a blow out,  
Then I get airs enough, but not the kind  
Of hares that I must have to raise the wind.
- MUG. Enough! you're members of the workhouse now,  
And mind you never kick up any row.
- SKULL. But my petition—may the women go  
To take a little walk?—now don't say no.
- MUG. Well, as I'm in good humour, sir, they may.
- SKULL. Long live the workhouse king! hurra!
- OMNES. Hurra!

(*Dance.—Scene closes.*)

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## SCENE II.

*An Apartment in the Workhouse.*

*Enter ARAMINTA.*

- ARAM. 'Tis Ismael Skullcrack fills alone my breast;  
He takes it all, and love has got the rest.  
In vain does Mahomet Muggins urge his suit—  
Compared with Ismael, Mahomet is a brute.  
About the latter, there's I don't know what,—  
'Tis not the lace that glitters on his hat—

'Tis not the staff he carries in his hand,  
 (His salary is good, I understand.)  
 But, hence with worldly thoughts ! none are above him :  
 Good gracious me ! I love—oh, how I love him !

## SONG.

AIR—(*From GUSTAVUS*)—" *I love him—how I love him !*"

I love him—how I love him !  
 Oh, mine I hope he soon will be !  
 Muggins, who is above him,  
 Is smaller far to me.  
 He stands five feet, by measure :  
 I want no greater treasure :  
 To see him is a pleasure,  
 And ask him out to tea.  
 Deep, deep in my breast I conceal  
 The fierce flame that heats me ;  
 Ne'er, ne'er e'en to him shall my lips reveal  
 All the love that I feel.  
 The voice of prudence I obey—  
 It bids me hide his name,  
 And only by myself I say—  
 I love him—how I love him ! &c.

(*Exeunt.*)

## SCENE III.

*A Washing Room in the Workhouse, with an enormous pump in the centre. On the P. S. side is a door leading to the FEMALE WARD ; on the O. P., a door leading to the Apartments of the Governor. The female paupers are discovered washing, and throwing about the soap-suds.*

## CHORUS OF PAUPERS.

What's equal, on earth, to a lark in the wash-tub,  
 When the stream from the pump does so shinningly flow ;



To pelt one another with towels and brushes,  
Or backwards and forwards the soap-suds to throw !  
Oh ! this is a pleasure so novel to paupers,  
For health in our gambols is sure to be found—  
Whilst sporting about in the depths of the wash-tub,  
We have some fine fun, and a washing all round.  
A lark ! for a lark ! &c.

MOLLY. Ladies and paupers ! we have all been splashing  
About in this here sink, to have a washing—  
It is too bad we e'er should be reduced to it.  
Wash us, indeed ! for my part, I'm not used to it.

SALLY. Nor I ! 'tis hard that into water chilly.  
We should be plunged, good ladies, *willy nilly*.  
Why should these people wish the plan to spoil,  
For the allotment of the barren soil ?  
Because, if dirt but constituted lands—

JUDY. You'd have a whole estate upon your hands !

MOLL. I only know—I will not stand this sort o'  
Subjection to a drench of soap and water !  
They soap us first ; and when they closer gather us,  
Who knows but they may also want to lather us ?

JUDY. 'Tis not the washing that displeases me,  
But 'tis the food—look at our last night's tea !  
'Twas half-an-ounce, ladies, as I'm assured,  
Four-shilling black, for the whole female ward !

SALLY. The very thought's enough to make one shiver—  
Tea, did you say ? zounds, it was pure new river !

MOLL. Ah ! that, indeed, I'd say, without compunction,  
'Twas nothing but a cup of neat Grand Junction.

JUDY. I cannot drink such rubbish ; for my part,  
Their tea seems just one sloe leaf to a quart.



MOLLY. Come, let's away, our private chamber seek,  
I've got a word in all your ears to speak.

(*Exeunt all but ARAMINTA and AMELIA.*)

ARAM. I'm glad you've staid behind, for I have seen  
Something superior about your mien,  
And wish to make a *confidante* of you.

AMEL. Do you?—then pray don't hesitate, but do!

ARAM. You've seen the beadle?

AMEL. Yes—I think his name  
Is Ismael Skullcrack.

ARAM. Ah! the very same.  
That gallant being loves me, and he'll try  
To cause that from the Workhouse I should fly.  
Will you assist me?

AMEL. Yes—there is a talk  
That the whole female ward's to have a walk;  
If so, you can to Ismael Skullcrack flee.

ARAM. Then, if I do, you'll come and lodge with me?

SONG.—AIR—"Come, dwell with me."

Come, lodge with me,—come, lodge with me,  
And our home shall be, our home shall be  
A nice two-pair in some open square,  
Perhaps at No. 2 or 3.  
My taste would be a second floor,  
Above the people's din and roar;  
The people, as they walk below,  
Would not disturb us with their row.  
Come, lodge with me, &c.

*Enter the Female Paupers and SHEEPSHANKS.*

SHEEPS. I've got official news; so, silence! hark!

MOLLY. Yes, let's have order for the Workhouse clerk?

JUDY. But what's his news? Is it the promised walk?

SHEEPS. How can I tell you, women, if you talk?

'Tis thus—great Mr. Muggins says you may  
Go all to take a little walk to-day,  
Excepting Araminta—she's to stay.

OMNES. She sha'n't!

JUDY. We do not stir one step without her.

SALLY. And we're prepared to play the deuce about her.

JUDY. Go without Araminta?—what a whim!

Why, what can Araminta be to him?

SHEEPS. Those are my orders; you've but to obey.

MOLLY. Then march your body off!

SHEEPS. I'm gone.

MOLLY. Away!

(Exit SHEEPSHANKS.)

ARAM. What's to be done?—go, take your walk alone.

JUDY. We do not stir without you!

OMNES. No, not one!

ARAM. Then I'll go too—

#### SONG.—ARAMINTA.

##### INVITATION SONG.—(From *Gustavus*.)

Fair dames, to you I bring a pretty invitation to a thing  
You'll like—the promised walk we are to take to-day;  
At least, the beadle told me so to say.  
So let us come at once away;  
In the streets of first-rate reputation,  
We shall go out soon our pranks to play—  
Delighted all I am sure you'll be.  
Oh! what a treat to use our feet  
Along the Strand or Regent-street;  
Through the Squares, where, in pairs,  
Dandies and coquettes we meet;

To pace the Quadrant round and round,  
Or wander by St. Giles's pound,  
Or, with our sparks, through the parks,  
To walk about and have our larks !

Oh ! what a treat, &c.

Where, in this dreadful hour,  
Shall we find means to deal with Workhouse power ?

*(The Stage is instantly covered with beadles' staves, and each pauper seizes one; they throw them about in a martial way, and go through a war dance. Enter SHEEPSHANKS, who, seeing the staves, exits, and returns with Police—as he comes in, the staves turn to brooms, and they all begin sweeping.)*

SHEEPS. Hollo, here ! what's the row ? What are ye at ?

MOLLY. Cleaning the court-yard.

SHEEPS. Is it only that ?

But don't about the yard so wildly rush,

But use your brooms—

MOLLY. I think you'd better brush !

*(MOLL CHUBB seizes him, takes him up in her arms, and puts him into the tub. Paupers form a phalanx round him with beadles' staves.)*

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#### SCENE IV.

*Street in London.*

*Enter ISMAEL SKULLCRACK.*

SKULL. As I was just now walking down the street,  
A little dirty boy I chanced to meet ;

## THE REVOLT OF THE WORKHOUSE.

And as he looked at me with searching eye,  
 “*Flare-up!*” he shouted with stentorian cry!  
 The circumstance, though trifling, did annoy;  
 But soon I met another little boy,  
 Who, with an air that still my senses bothers,  
 Cried “*flare-up.*” too—and then there came two  
                   others;

And these, as I’d just raised my cane to *lare-up*,  
 Slipped from me with a louder cry of “*flare up!*”  
 In fact, from every one I chanced to meet,  
 “*Flare up*” was still the cry along the street!  
 What can such omens mean?—horrors like these  
 Announc’d the cackling of the Roman geese.  
 I’m sure there’s something awful in the wind:  
 I cannot see before—I dare not look behind;  
 I’m sharp for action—sharper than a needle;  
 Down, boisterous bosom—cool, blood of the beadle.  
 These words, “*flare up!*” still ring in both my ears,  
 And gives mysterious strength to all my fears;  
 They bid me do’t, and though my heart it tear up,  
 I’ll go—I must—I will—I ought to “*flare up!*”

(*Exit.*)

*Enter* MUGGINS.

MUG. Surely I heard some noise—where shall I go?  
 My brain’s on fire—my pulse beats fast, then  
                   slow!

Am I, the master of the workhouse, Lord?  
 Or am I vanquished by the female ward?  
 With calling out police, I’m now quite hoarse.  
 Police! police! my salary for the force!  
 Last night I dreamt a dream—could it be true?

(*Enter SHEEPSHANKS unperceived.*)

Stop!—who the devil's that? O, is it you?  
O, Sheepshanks, how you startled me. But now,  
Say, Caitiff, quickly, what has been the row!

SHEEPS. Great Sir, as I was sitting in a sort o'  
Dog sleep over my half-pint of porter,  
And blowing of returns a gentle cloud,  
I heard some voices talking very loud.

MUG. Loud voices?—how I tremble!—but proceed.

SHEEPS. I went and saw—

MUG. What was it that you seed?

SHEEPS. The paupers all with each a beadle's staff!

MUG. I droop!—fetch me a pint of half-and-half!

SHEEPS. For half-and-half proceedings 'tis no season;  
We must be prompt—the females plot vile treason!

MUG. Explain!—what saw ye afterwards?

SHEEPS. O, then,  
I went and fetched two of our ablest men,  
Expecting from the staves to get a drubbing;  
But, lo! we found them with their birch-brooms  
scrubbing!

Then, seizing me, they soused me in the tub!

MUG. And scrubb'd you with their brooms?

SHEEPS. Aye, there's the rub.

But waste no time,—the ward is in revolt,  
And, I believe, it is their plan to bolt.

MUG. Then let's be after them—my soul is fired!  
Quick, to pursuit!—Here, Cab! are you unhired?

(*Exeunt.*)

## SCENE V.

*St. Paul's by Moonlight—Female Paupers discovered in Groups asleep — Three Boys with baked Potatoes in tin stands—SKULLCRACK enters to music, "Slumber my Darling."*

SKULL. Ah! here my lovely Araminta lies,—  
Sleep has unclosed her mouth, and shut her eyes.  
I'll snatch a kiss before she wakes; yet, lo!  
Love whispers yes, and honour answers no—  
Between them both, I don't know what to do.  
She wakes! let honour then my love subdue.

ARAM. (*Waking and coming forward.*) What are you at? I  
hope you've not been rash.

SKULL. I would not, for the world, my love abash!  
But hark!

ARAM. Begone!

SKULL. One kiss before we sever.

You won't!—I'm off!—adieu, perhaps for ever!  
The time will come, when you may need me; *then—*

ARAM. Then what?

SKULL. Why, perhaps I may look in again!  
(*Exit.*)

(*The Female Paupers go through evolutions—  
Dance—Then enter Police with MUGGINS and  
SHEEPSHANKS at their head.—MUGGINS ad-  
vances to address Female Paupers.*)



- MUG. Ye female paupers, is it any use  
Of me to ask a temporary truce ?
- MOLLY. We cannot answer that until we knows  
What measures you are ready to propose.
- MUG. What do you want ?
- MOLLY. Bread less than four days old.
- MUG. Woman, your proposition's very bold !  
But speak,—what are your other wishes ?—say.
- JUDY. I want, old chap, lump sugar in my *tay* !
- MUG. *Lump* sugar ! monstrous !—moist you ought to  
jump at ;  
If you don't like it, you yourselves may *lump* it !
- MOLLY. We cannot hear these insults to the ward.  
Ladies, to arms !—let the police be floored !

*(An engagement takes place between the Police  
and Paupers, in which the latter are triumphant.)*

*Enter SKULLCRACK.*

- SKULL. Come, let these shocking civil conflicts cease.  
*(To the audience.)* Have I the power to preserve  
the peace ?
- MUG. Well, be it so ; let workhouse struggles end,  
And let the beadle be the paupers' friend ;  
Conciliation now is all the go,  
Therefore I'll promise, if you don't say no,  
Lump sugar,—bread the second day,—and cheese  
In any quantity the ladies please.  
And though their rising of revolt may savour,  
Still let them rise, each night—in public favour.

## FINALE.

## GRAND CHORUS.

AIR—" *Finale to the First Act of Gustavus.*"

Hail ! all hail ! to our workhouse king !  
With shouts we'll make the court-yard ring !  
All you female paupers, sing—  
Long live the king !

Hail to Mr. Muggins,  
The workhouse joy and glory ;  
His name we'll shout for ever,  
Rever'd in paupers' story !  
Blessings on old Mr. Muggins,  
May the place be his for ever !  
Long live the king !

(MUGGINS is lifted upon the shoulders of two men ;  
the rest surround him, and shout till scene closes.)







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The revolt of the  
workhouse

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